



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Division for Air Quality Urges Kentuckians to ‘Learn Before You Burn’

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 9, 2013) – Spring-cleaning season has arrived and for many Kentuckians that means burning unwanted debris. The Kentucky Division for Air Quality (DAQ) reminds you to learn before you burn. Illegal burning could result in fines of up to \$25,000 per day per violation.

Many people may not realize that burning trash is illegal in Kentucky. “Today’s trash is different than the trash our grandparents used to burn,” said DAQ Director John Lyons. “Plastics, chemicals, and other synthetic materials are far more common in the things we throw away. Burning this trash releases high levels of toxic pollutants such as dioxins, sulfur dioxide, lead and mercury.”

State law prohibits the burning of many materials including plastic, tires, cans, coated wire, carpeting and food waste. In addition, the burning of trailers, buildings, and construction and demolition debris such as shingles, drywall and insulation is prohibited. Painted, stained or treated wood products like fence posts, pallets, and furniture are illegal to burn, because they release dangerous toxins into the air. Items that cannot be recycled should be taken to a state-permitted landfill.

Smoke from open burning is a health problem that affects everyone, but especially children, the elderly, and those with existing ailments like asthma. Children are particularly sensitive to air pollution from open burning, because their bodies are still developing. Children also breathe 50 percent more oxygen per pound of body weight than adults do, so their lungs are exposed to more harmful pollutants.

Open burning isn’t just unhealthy, it’s also dangerous. A small fire can quickly spread, especially during windy weather, resulting in widespread damage. From April 5 through April 7, for example, the Kentucky Division of Forestry reported 110 separate wildfires burning a total of 2765 acres.

Some open burning is legal with restrictions. Campfires, fires for cooking, and fires to dispose of tree limbs are permitted in most counties, except when a county-wide burn ban has been declared, or when prohibited by local ordinance. During fire hazard season, which runs through the end of April, it is illegal to burn anything within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland area between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Restrictions may also apply during summer months for certain counties whose current pollution levels exceed air quality standards.

Use common sense before burning anything:

- Never burn within 50 feet of any structure
- Never burn near streams or sinkholes
- Never burn near landfills or under utility lines

To report illegal open burning or to learn more about open burning restrictions in your area, please call the Division for Air Quality's open burn hotline at 1-888-BURN-LAW (1-888-287-6529) or visit <http://air.ky.gov>.

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